



Appropriations Committee

February 14, 2014

**April E. Morrison, Program Manager
Corporation for Supportive Housing**

Written Testimony to support the reinstatement of funding to Connecticut General Statutes §17a-62a Connecticut Homeless Youth Act

I appreciate the opportunity to extend support for the reinstatement of funding to Connecticut General Statutes §17a-62a - Connecticut Homeless Youth Act. At CSH it is our mission to advance solutions that use housing as a platform for services to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people, maximize public resources and build healthy communities. We believe that the reinstatement of funding to this work is an important first step in ending youth homelessness in CT by providing DCF with capital resources for outreach and drop-in centers to youth in immediate crisis.

The recent study, "Invisible No More: Creating Opportunities for Youth who are Homeless" (*The Consultation Center at Yale University, 2013*), highlighted some of the vulnerabilities homeless youth in CT experience. For example, of the 98 homeless youth interviewed:

- 32% dropped out of school with 12% reporting it was their school that said they could not attend
- 66% were unemployed
- 25% reported contemplating suicide in the previous 12 months
- 19% traded sex for money, a place to stay, drugs and alcohol

Moreover, in order to permanently end homelessness for this vulnerable population our efforts must also include efforts for reunification with family or supportive adults when possible as well as access to permanent, stable housing with support services attached for youth without family or other reunification option. CSH is currently working with the Homeless Youth Workgroup of the Reaching Home Campaign to strategically evaluate the need and feasibility of creating permanent supportive housing option unique to homeless and transition-age youth ages 18-24.

Part of the exploratory background for this work was in the last months of 2013, speaking with young adults who had experienced homelessness. I spoke with a young man in Waterbury, CT who had no connection with his father, whose mother was drug-addicted, involved in illicit activities, and was extremely neglectful of him and his two sisters. He was cared for by his grandmother until that was no longer an option. His sisters were placed in group homes as they needed a high level of care while he entered foster care. When that placement broke down he found himself homeless. He lived on the streets, mostly in abandoned buildings, until he connected with an adult homeless outreach team who recommended a shelter stay until housing could be secured. However, he felt so threatened and afraid in adult shelters that so he chose to continue living on the street until he was eventually housed. Since becoming housed, he has been able to secure employment and is considering entering a trade school to study automotive repair. I relate this story to show that a crisis response geared specifically toward youth could have made a big difference in how much time this young man spent on the streets. The ability to quickly access stable housing would have



kept him from experiencing the dangers of the streets, hunger, lack of medical treatment and other intolerable situations that he was forced to endure.

In my previous positions over the last 30 years I have worked with abused, abandoned and neglected infants, children and adolescents. I have also worked with adults in supportive housing in Waterbury, Danbury, and Torrington CT. I know firsthand that without critical intervention these children are at great risk of staying in the system through adulthood. I strongly urge you to consider the re-funding of efforts that truly have a chance at breaking the cycle of homelessness within CT.

Respectfully submitted,

April E. Morrison
Program Manager, CSH